

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed July 25, 2007, and made final, has been carefully reviewed and the foregoing amendment has been made in consequence thereof.

Claims 1 and 3-20 are now pending in this application. Claims 1-20 stand rejected. Claim 2 has been canceled.

The rejection of Claims 1-20 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,604,084 to Powers, et al. (hereinafter referred to as "Powers") in view of U.S. Patent 6,625,511 to Suzuki, et al. (hereinafter referred to as "Suzuki") is respectfully traversed.

Applicants respectfully submit that neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests the claimed invention. As discussed below, at least difference between the cited references and the present invention is that neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests a system for evaluating process performance, wherein the system includes a server configured to receive information pertaining to process performance evaluation categories selected by the user.

Moreover, neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests a server configured to display at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function, wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed one category at a time based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.

Powers describes a performance evaluation system (10) that uses productivity and quality data to evaluate the performance of an individual, group, process, or other suitable type of item or operation. A database (16) includes a set of organization tables (82) that allow an enterprise to set up the system (10) to correspond to its organization structure. Organization tables (82) include plan tables (86) that store questions (186), performance areas (184), and guidelines for generating performance evaluations. A performance area table (154) lists all of the performance areas (184) in the system (10) by a performance area

ID. Each performance area (184) includes a grouping of questions (186) that relate to a particular area of job performance. Organization tables (82) also include evaluation tables (92) that store responses and scores for completed evaluations. Moreover, organization tables (82) include filter tables (94) that store filters for sorting data and displaying results in the reports (44) and charts (46). As an evaluation is completed, responses (190) to questions (186) are used to calculate a quality score (192) for the performance area (184) related to the questions (186). After the quality score (192) for each performance area (184) has been calculated, the quality scores (192) are summed and divided by the sum of a relative weight for all answered questions (186) to derive a total evaluation quality score (194). Output charts (46) display graphic and textual information useful in determining the overall performance of a member and identifying ways to improve that performance.

Suzuki describes an evaluation apparatus (10) that includes a workshop evaluating unit (10a) designed for evaluating, through estimation, the real abilities of the manufacturing workshops, and a product evaluating unit (10b) for estimating the fraction defective upon manufacturing of a product or component parts of the product at a manufacturing workshop. To perform the evaluation using apparatus (10), an evaluator selects an answer alternative (76) for each query item (75). A screen image output is provided that includes workshop improvement points (88a), a short-term measures plan (88b), and a long-term measures plan (88c).

Claim 1 recites a system for evaluating process performance, wherein the system includes “a device . . . a server connected to said device and configured to receive, from a user via said device, information pertaining to process performance evaluation categories selected by the user, said server further configured to: receive process production capability information data using a computer . . . compile the received information . . . display to the user information related to the production process . . . compare the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, to reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions, wherein each question is related to at least one category of the production process . . . display the results of the compared information to the user via said device

wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function . . . display at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function, wherein the at least one suggestion is sortable based on the categories of the production process, wherein the at least one suggestion is based on the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, and wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed one category at a time based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.”

Neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests a system for evaluating process performance, as is recited in Claim 1. More specifically, neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests a server configured to receive, from a user via a device, information pertaining to process performance evaluation categories selected by the user. Rather, in contrast to the present invention, Powers describes a performance evaluation system that uses productivity and quality data to evaluate the performance of a member and presents an evaluation report by displaying information regarding the member's overall performance and identifying ways to improve the member's performance, and Suzuki describes a manufacturing workshop evaluation that outputs workshop improvement points, a short-term measures plan, and a long-term measures plan.

Additionally, the Office Action asserts at page 6 that Powers describes a server “configured to receive information pertaining to process performance evaluation categories selected by the user (See column 9, lines 47-64, column 11, lines 32-60, wherein the evaluation categories are set up by a user).” Applicants traverse this assertion. More specifically, at Column 9, lines 47-64, Powers actually describes a performance area table that lists all performance areas in the performance evaluation system. This section also describes a question assignment table that assigns questions to the performance areas. Moreover, at Column 11, lines 32-60, Powers actually describes importing system data using a data file and mapping the data to an appropriate data table. This section also describes calculation of a quality score for a performance area using a number of questions and answers

relating to the performance area. However, Powers does not describe nor suggest a server configured to receive information pertaining to process performance evaluation categories selected by a user. Applicants submit that Suzuki does not make up for the deficiencies of Powers.

Moreover, neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests a server configured to display at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function, wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed one category at a time based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion. Rather, in contrast to the present invention, Powers describes a performance evaluation system that uses productivity and quality data to evaluate the performance of a member and presents an evaluation report by displaying information regarding the member's overall performance and identifying ways to improve the member's performance, and Suzuki describes a manufacturing workshop evaluation that outputs workshop improvement points, a short-term measures plan, and a long-term measures plan.

The Office Action asserts at page 4 that Powers describes that “the at least one category results and information is displayed separately for each category of the production process based on user selection of that category for which to display the at least one category results and information (See column 3, lines 43-column 4, line 25, column 8, line 61-67, column 11, lines 49-60, and column 13, lines 32-45, disclosing the relationship of questions to performance areas and categories, wherein the completed evaluations are output and displayed to the user, and each category is specified in a separate table).” Applicants traverse this assertion. More specifically, at Column 3, lines 43-Column 4, line 25, Powers actually describes the types of reports that may be generated by the performance evaluation system and the contents of each report type. For example, a detailed report includes a productivity and quality report, a quality evaluation report, a productivity analysis report, and a detail evaluation report. The productivity and quality report presents actual scores, maximum scores, and percentages of maximum for both quality and productivity by an evaluation date for each member with group averages for all hierarchical levels. The quality evaluation

report presents notes, actual scores, maximum scores, and percentages of maximum for each question of an evaluation and subtotals by performance areas, evaluation, member, and any additional hierarchical levels.

Moreover, at Column 8, lines 61-67, Powers actually describes a set of plan tables including questions, performance areas constructed of a set of questions, and guidelines constructed of a set of performance areas. Further, at Column 11, lines 49-60, Powers actually describes the calculation of a quality score for a performance area using a number of questions and answers relating to the performance area. Column 13, lines 32-45 describes a set of filter tables including a field indicating whether a filter includes plan criteria. Types of plan criteria include evaluations, guidelines, performance areas, questions, expressions, and evaluators. This same section of Powers also describes an evaluation filter table that associates a filter with evaluations, a guideline filter table that associates a filter with an identified guideline, a performance area filter table that associates a filter with a specified performance area, a question filter table that specifies questions for a filter, an expressions filter table that specifies expressions for a filter, and an evaluators filter table that specifies evaluators for a filter. However, Powers does not describe nor suggest at least one suggestion for each category of the production process displayed one category at a time based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.

Furthermore, Figure 8 of Powers illustrates a typical report output. More specifically, the report shown in Figure 8 includes output for *all* evaluated performance areas. Powers does not describe or suggest, however, a *separate* display of performance improvement suggestions for each category. Further, Applicants' originally filed specification explains at Paragraphs [0039] and [0040], for example, that a summary screen includes a number of buttons relating to each of the selected categories. Depressing a button displays production process improvement suggestions within a text area. Depressing other buttons results in displaying improvements suggestions unique to each evaluation category. An exemplary embodiment of the summary screen is shown in Figure 5. Applicants submit that one of ordinary skill in the art will recognize the differences between the reports described by

Powers and the summary screen described and claimed herein, after reading the specification in light of the figures.

Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 1 is submitted to be patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claim 2 has been canceled. Claims 3-8 depend from independent Claim 1. When the recitations of Claims 3-8 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 1, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 3-8 likewise are patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claim 9 recites a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process by operating a system including a server and at least one device connected to the server. The method includes “defining, using a computer, evaluation area categories based on an evaluation of the production performance capabilities of at least one of the process and a part being evaluated, wherein the evaluation area categories are selected by a user . . . receiving, using the computer, information relevant to the capabilities of the production process within the evaluation categories . . . compiling the received information . . . comparing the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, to reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions, wherein each question is related to at least one category of the production process . . . displaying the results to the user via the device wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function . . . displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function, wherein the at least one suggestion is sortable based on the categories of the production process, wherein the at least one suggestion is based on the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, and wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed one category at a time based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.”

Neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process, as is recited in Claim 9. More specifically, neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests defining, using a computer, evaluation area categories based on an evaluation of the production performance capabilities of at least one of the process and a part being evaluated, wherein the evaluation area categories are selected by a user. Moreover, neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes nor suggests displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function, wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed one category at a time based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion. Rather, in contrast to the present invention, Powers describes a performance evaluation system that uses productivity and quality data to evaluate the performance of a member and presents an evaluation report by displaying information regarding the member's overall performance and identifying ways to improve the member's performance, and Suzuki describes a manufacturing workshop evaluation that outputs workshop improvement points, a short-term measures plan, and a long-term measures plan.

Applicants respectfully submit that Claim 9, as herein amended, recites a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process including steps essentially similar to those recited in Claim 1. Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 9 is submitted to be patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claims 10-14 depend from independent Claim 9. When the recitations of Claims 10-14 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 9, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 10-14 likewise are patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claim 15 recites a method for evaluating performance of a production process using a network connecting a plurality of users, the network including a server and a plurality of user display devices. The method includes "receiving, from the users using a computer, information concerning evaluation categories relevant to the production process, wherein the evaluation categories are selected by the users . . . assigning each evaluation category at least one weighted factor that normalizes the received information with respect to a relative

contribution to a process capability improvement of the received information . . . compiling the information received from the users with the server . . . evaluating the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, in comparison to reference information in the form of answers to questions developed to encompass an expected range of answers from the users responding to the questions, wherein each question is related to at least one category of the production process . . . displaying the results to the users wherein the results include a numerical score representing a relative capability of the process being evaluated to perform a desired manufacturing function . . . displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function, wherein the at least one suggestion is sortable to the plurality of users based on the categories of the production process, wherein the at least one suggestion is based on the received information in the form of answers to respective questions, and wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed one category at a time based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion.”

Neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests a method for evaluating performance of a production process using a network connecting a plurality of users, as is recited in Claim 15. More specifically, neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes or suggests receiving, from the users using a computer, information concerning evaluation categories relevant to the production process, wherein the evaluation categories are selected by the users. Moreover, neither Powers nor Suzuki, considered alone or in combination, describes nor suggests displaying at least one suggestion for improving performance of the desired manufacturing function, wherein the at least one suggestion for each category of the production process is displayed one category at a time based on a user selection of the category for which to display the at least one suggestion. Rather, in contrast to the present invention, Powers describes a performance evaluation system that uses productivity and quality data to evaluate the performance of a member and presents an evaluation report by displaying information regarding the member's overall performance and identifying ways to improve the member's performance, and Suzuki describes a manufacturing workshop evaluation that outputs workshop improvement points, a short-term measures plan, and a long-term measures plan.

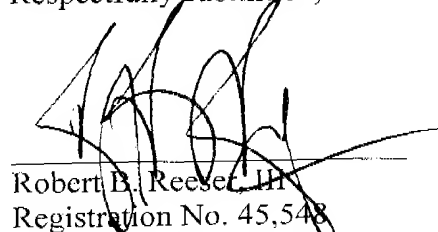
Applicants respectfully submit that Claim 15, as herein amended, recites a method for evaluating performance capabilities of a production process including steps essentially similar to those recited in Claim 1. Accordingly, for at least the reasons set forth above, Claim 15 is submitted to be patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

Claims 16-20 depend from independent Claim 15. When the recitations of Claims 16-20 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 15, Applicants submit that dependent Claims 16-20 likewise are patentable over Powers in view of Suzuki.

For at least the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully request that the Section 103 rejection of Claims 1-20 be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, all the claims now active in this application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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